MARVEL LEGACY

THANOS WINS

16

THANOS®

CATES
SHAW
FABELA

MARVEL
AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.
LANDMARK 100TH EPISODE
FRIDAY, MARCH 9
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A total obsession with power drives him. . . to control the forces of the universe.
He is the Mad Titan. He is. . .

THANOS

Thanos has been dragged to the end of time and come face-to-face with himself—King Thanos, who demands the help of his younger self in a last gambit to win the love of Death: killing the Fallen One.

But first...a tale millennia in the making—how Frank Castle became the Cosmic Ghost Rider...

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WHEN HE WAS A YOUNGER MAN, AND NOT YET A COSMIC-FUELED ENGINE OF TIME-TRAVELING MURDER, **FRANK CASTLE'S** WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE SHOT TO DEATH BEFORE HIS EYES.

THIS EVENT LED HIM TO BECOME **THE PUNISHER.** A ONE-MAN WAR ON DOMESTIC TERROR IN EVERY FORM IT WOULD TAKE.

BUT, AS STATED, THIS WAS A VERY LONG TIME AGO, AND, IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS, HARDLY WORTH MENTIONING.

THE STORY THAT MATTERS, THE ONE YOU ARE ABOUT TO WITNESS, IS ONE NO MORTAL HAS EVER SEEN OR HEARD.

IT IS A STORY OF THREE DEVILS, AND THE ONE FOOL WHO MADE DEALS WITH THEM ALL.

AND TO BEGIN SUCH A DARK LEGEND, WE BEGIN WHERE ALL STORIES WILL SOMEDAY GO TO DIE...

WE BEGIN WITH THANOS.

FRANK CASTLE WAS ONE OF THE LAST MEN STANDING WHEN THANOS BATTLED THE EARTH'S HEROES FOR THE LAST TIME.

AN EMPIRE'S FINAL BATTLE IS RARELY RECORDED IN ITS OWN HISTORY BOOKS. MUCH LESS IN THOSE KEPT BY ITS CONQUERORS.

TRUE TO THIS SENTIMENT, TO THIS VERY DAY, THERE ARE NO MENTIONS OF THIS LITTLE WAR IN THE RECORDS THAT KING THANOS KEEPS.

PERHAPS THE OMISSION WAS BORN OF SPITE, AN UNWILLINGNESS TO RECORD THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO BEAT HIM TIME AND TIME AGAIN.

JUST AS LIKELY IS THE NOTION THAT THANOS SIMPLY **FORGOT.** HE **WAS** RATHER BUSY IN THOSE FINAL DAYS.

AFTER ALL, WHEN ONE IS MURDERING EVERY SENTIENT BEING IN THE COSMOS BY HAND... A LAPSE IN PERFECT RECORD-KEEPING CAN BE FORGIVEN.

BUT EVEN IF THERE SOMEHOW WERE SOME RECORD OF THIS EVENT, FRANK CASTLE WOULD NOT BE MENTIONED.

FOR ALL OF HIS BLUSTER AND MURDEROUS DRIVE, THE PUNISHER WOULD AMOUNT TO LITTLE MORE THAN A FOOTNOTE IN THE GRAND TAPESTRY OF THE MIGHTY HEROES OF EARTH.

IF IT WEREN'T, THAT IS, FOR HIS FINAL THOUGHT. FOR THE ONE HATEFUL PHRASE THAT SHOT THROUGH HIS BRAIN IN HIS FINAL MOMENTS.

AS HE LAY DYING, AND STARING UP AT THE MAD TITAN SLAUGHTERING HIS PLANET, FRANK CASTLE THOUGHT ONE THING...AND ONE THING ONLY...

"I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO PUNISH THAT PURPLE SONOFABITCH."

TO WHICH THE UNIVERSE REPLIED...

"ANYTHING"?

AND SO FRANK CASTLE, THE PUNISHER, SIGNED HIS FIRST DEMONIC DEAL...AND BECAME THE

GHOST RIDER

SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.

BUT, AS LUCK (AND A CERTAIN MAD TITAN) WOULD HAVE IT...

...THERE WAS NOTHING MUCH LEFT IN ALL OF THE WORLD TO PUNISH OR AVENGE.

AND AS DAYS TURNED TO YEARS, AND DECADES TURNED TO CENTURIES... AND AS THE UNRELENTING MARCH OF MILLENNIA DROVE ON AND ON...

...THE GHOST RIDER DID AS WELL.

ROAMING ENDLESSLY. ALONE AND UNDYING.

WITH NO ONE TO KILL.

AND NO ONE TO LOVE.

WHEN EVEN THE DEVIL FELL SILENT TO HIS CALLS, FRANK CASTLE RATHER...AGGRESSIVELY... BEGAN TO LOSE HIS MIND.

AND THAT IS WHEN THE DEVOURER ARRIVED.

BUT GALACTUS DID NOT COME TO EARTH TO FEED OR DESTROY OR FIGHT. NO, NOT THIS DAY.

BOOM

GALACTUS, YOU SEE, HAD BEEN HUNTED ACROSS THE STARS BY THANOS.

BARELY ESCAPING HIS ASSAULT, GALACTUS ARRIVED HUMBLED TO THE WORLD WHERE HE HAD SUFFERED HIS GREATEST DEFEATS.

HE CAME FOR PROTECTION. FOR ASYLUM.

SOMEONE... P-PLEASE...

HE CAME FOR...

HELP!

BUT GALACTUS WAS TOO LATE. THE EARTH AND ITS CHAMPIONS HAD BEEN DEAD FOR EONS NOW.

RICHARDS! WHERE ARE YOU?! WH-WHERE ARE THEY? WH-WHAT HAS BEFALLEN...?

NO... NO, PLEASE, NO...

ALL BUT ONE...

HEY-O! DOWN HERE, KILLER!

HEY, MAN! 'S GALACTUS, RIGHT? HAHA, DAMN LONG TIME NO SEE, RIGHT?

OOF! SOMEONE REALLY BEAT THE @#$% OUTTA YOU, HUH? YEESH.

WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU? WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

OH, YOU AIN'T HEARD? YEAH, THANOS KILLED EVERYONE, MAN. JUST CAME AND OBLITERATED ALL OF THE, UH...WELL, EVERYONE REALLY! HA!

NO...

YUUUP. I GOT KILLED, TOO. CAME BACK, THOUGH. I'M THE GHOST RIDER. SPIRIT A' BLAH BLAH WHATEVER.

I SEE. AND YOU ARE THE...ONLY--

YEAH, SINCE THE WORLD ENDED I BEEN, UH...WELL, I AIN'T BEEN DOING MUCH, REALLY! I TELL YOU WHAT, THOUGH--I AIN'T MISSED A STEP! NOT ME. NOT OL' FRANK CASTLE. NO WAY.

FRANK...?

HEY! REAL QUICK QUESTION...

YOU... REAL?

LIKE, IS THIS *REAL RIGHT NOW?*

BECAUSE...I, UH...SOMETIMES I GET M-MAYBE CONFUSED, Y'KNOW?

:SIGH:

YES, LITTLE DEMON... GALACTUS IS REAL.

OH, OH OKAY, GOOD. SO, W-WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, GALACTUS?

DO?

YEAH, YOU CAME HERE SCREAMING FOR HELP, RIGHT?

WHAT CAN I HELP YOU WITH?

GALACTUS TOLD THE GHOST RIDER ABOUT THANOS' BLOODY CAMPAIGN ACROSS THE STARS.

OF THE FALL OF ATTILAN AND THE DEATH OF THE INHUMANS. THE NEAR EXTERMINATION OF THE SHI'AR, THE KREE, THE SKRULLS.

OF THE RUMORS THAT THANOS PLANNED TO KILL EVEN THE COUNCIL OF WATCHERS AND THE GODS OF THE NORTH.

AND FINALLY OF HIS OWN BATTLE WITH THE DESTROYER.

AND HOW HE ONLY ESCAPED WITH THE HELP OF HIS NOW (HE BELIEVED) FALLEN HERALD, THE SILVER SURFER...

WELL, DAMN.

LOOKS LIKE WE BOTH WANT THAT @#$% DEAD, HUH?

I TELL YOU WHAT. YOU MAKE ME YOUR HERALD AND HOOK ME UP WITH THEM CRAZY COSMIC POWERS AND ALL A' THAT...

...AND TOGETHER WE CAN GO AND PUNISH THAT PURPLE @#$% TOGETHER, HUH?

AND WHAT, PRAY TELL, IS IN THIS DEAL FOR GALACTUS?

OH, UH... WELL, HOW 'BOUT THIS-- AFTER I'M DONE WITH THANOS?

YOU CAN EAT EARTH. I-IF YOU STILL WANT TO.

IS THAT GOOD?

AND SO, FRANK CASTLE MADE HIS SECOND DEAL WITH THE DEVIL IN AS MANY LIFETIMES...TO BECOME

GHOST RIDER

HERALD OF GALACTUS!

TOGETHER THEY ROARED ACROSS THE COSMOS ON A QUEST TO HALT THANOS' SYSTEMATIC ANNIHILATION OF EVERY SENTIENT BEING IN EXISTENCE.

THEIR INCREDIBLE STORY LASTED CENTURIES.

THE HERCULEAN DEEDS THEY ACCOMPLISHED, AND THE FOES THEY VANQUISHED IN THEIR SEARCH FOR THE **MAD TITAN KING, BECAME LEGEND.**

THE ROAR OF THE RIDER'S ENGINES (AUDIBLE EVEN IN THE VACUUM OF SPACE) BECAME A BEACON OF HOPE TO THOSE STILL ALIVE TO HEAR THEM.

A FAINT, DISTANT PROMISE THAT... PERHAPS NOT ALL WAS LOST IN THE STARS.

THAT EVEN IN THESE DARKEST OF DAYS...THE HEART OF A HERO STILL BEAT INSIDE OF THE CHEST OF A DEAD MAN.

BUT THEN, OF COURSE...

VWAAMMM

RAAGGHH!

I HAVE HEARD TELL OF YOU, RIDER. YOU DEFY DEATH. THANOS IS...

...INTRIGUED.

BOOM

YOU THINK I'M THE WORST THING OUT HERE, BOY?

I HAVEN'T EVEN BEGUN!

I CANNOT KILL YOU. YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ME.

BUT YOU COME WITH ME, RIDER. AND AT MY SIDE, I WILL SHOW YOU MORE EVIL THAN YOU CAN PUNISH IN A THOUSAND LIFETIMES...

WITH THAT, FRANK CASTLE MADE HIS THIRD AND FINAL DEAL WITH THE DEVIL.

AND IN SO DOING, BECAME

THE RIDER

BLACK RIGHT-HAND OF THE MAD KING THANOS.

AND THROUGH ALL OF THIS, THIS ENDLESS DEATH AND REBIRTH AT THE HANDS OF DEMONS AND GODS...

...THE COUNTLESS INFINITIES HE HAS EXPERIENCED, THE INCREDIBLE SIGHTS HIS LONG-DEAD EYES HAVE SEEN...

AFTER ALL OF THESE THINGS...

...IF YOU WERE TO TELL **FRANK CASTLE** WHERE HE WOULD BE STANDING WHEN THE UNIVERSE CAME TO ITS **EVENTUAL AND INEVITABLE END**...

...HE WOULDN'T BELIEVE YOU IN A MILLION YEARS.

THE ANNIHILUS HORDE? REALLY, NORRIN, IS THIS ALL THAT YOU HAVE BROUGHT FOR ME? AFTER ALL THIS TIME?

AGH!

HAHA!

RATATATATATATATATATATÁ

RIDER! SOMETHING HELLISH, IF YOU ARE DONE PLAYING WITH YOUR FIREARMS!

HA! YOU KNOW I ALWAYS FORGET I CAN DO THAT STUFF!

AGGHHHH!

KA-THOOM

HA!

WELL, BOY, YOU MAY HAVE BEEN RIGHT. PERHAPS IT WAS A WASTE TO BRING YOU ALL THE WAY HERE AFTER ALL. THE RIDER COULD HAVE HANDLED THIS HIMSELF!

HEY, THANKS. I COULDNA DONE IT WITHOUT YO--

SILENCE. THIS...THIS IS NOT RIGHT...

CAN IT HAVE BEEN THIS EASY?

NO.

WHAAAAAM

BOOM

AGH!

I DON'T CARE HOW MANY OF YOU THERE ARE...

...THIS ENDS TODAY, THANOS. IT'S LONG PAST TIME YOU ANSWERED FOR THE LIVES YOU HAVE STOLEN.

HA! IF YOU COULD KILL ME, YOU WOULD HAVE DONE IT BY NOW! TELL ME, NORRIN...

IF YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY JUST TO DIE...

WHY DID YOU WAIT SO DAMN LONG?!

I WAS NOT WAITING...

RUMBLE

...I WAS WORKING.

BOOM

HA! IS THAT SO?!

ON WHAT?!

RMMMBBBLLL

ON BECOMING WORTHY.

THOR

TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT ISSUE:

THANOS #17

AT THE END OF TIME...

...IT'S THE WORTHY...

...VS. THE WORST OF THE WORST.

WHO WILL WIN?!

ZONE